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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **INL Works With Multiple Partners and Agencies to Strengthen Rule of Law in Nigeria**

**Abuja** – U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission Kathleen FitzGibbons applauded the efforts of the Nigerian Correctional Service to implement the 2019 Nigerian Correctional Service Act and recognized the importance of the Act to ensure that justice is carried out in proportion to criminal offenses, contribute to the rehabilitation and reformation of offenders, and promote justice for the Nigerian society at large at a hand-over ceremony at the Nigerian Correctional Service. Through the Embassy's office of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) the ceremony recognized the assistance INL has provided to support the Nigerian government in the effective implementation of the Act, and the strengthening of rule of law in Nigeria.

Support includes printed posters to educate the public about the new Act and billboards for each State Command to ensure the public is aware of the service the State Commands provide under the new Act. The U.S government also has supported the Correctional Service to develop a database for inmates awaiting trial, which helps to reduce overcrowding and ensure speedy judicial processing. Based on our support, working with implementers Partners Global, Partners West Africa, and the Network of University Legal Aid Institutions, the Correctional Service took the initiative to develop the Correctional Information Management Systems (CIMS). First implemented in Kuje prison, CIMS has now been expanded to assist administrative processing of detainees and inmates in multiple facilities, including Ogun and Nasarawa States with INL support.

Furthermore, under the "Reforming Pretrial Detention in Nigeria" project, funded by INL, Partners Global with Nigeria-based Network of University Legal Aid Network (NULAI) has implemented a U.S.-Nigeria Virtual Exchange for Legal Aid Clinic to explore national and international norms of criminal procedure and law.

Recognizing that effective criminal procedure requires continued legal education and professional development for the many professionals dedicated to strengthening the rule of law, INL supported a series of trainings in recent months implemented by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). UNODC hosted training sessions for defense attorneys, prosecutors, judges and police officers in North East and North Central Nigeria to emphasize best practices in securing a crime scene, designing and implementing evidentiary handling procedure, and maintaining evidentiary integrity.

The United States remains committed to delivering tools and assistance which serve to strengthen the rule of law for all Nigerians, from arrest and detention, through trials and reform and a safe reintegration to the community.

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**Photo Caption:** U.S. Embassy INL Director Jason Smith, U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission Kathleen FitzGibbon and Nigeria Prison Service DCG Operations Sylvester Nwakuche